

# MCNR 302:

## McNair Graduate Application Preparation

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Fall 2024

Instructor: Dr. Cheryl Fortner

Credit Hours: 1 Grade Basis: S/U

**Section 600 (CRN: 12885) Meets Fridays 2-3:30 pm in Dinkins 103**

**Prerequisites:** Senior standing and current status as a Winthrop McNair Scholars Program Participant

**Dr. Fortner's MCNR 302 Office Hours:** Fridays 12:30 – 1:30 pm (before class) in Dinkins 104. Use [calendly.com/cfw/mcnair](https://calendly.com/cfw/mcnair) to schedule Zoom and in-person appointments. McNair Scholars can reach Dr. Fortner at [FortnerC@Winthrop.edu](mailto:FortnerC@Winthrop.edu), 803/323-2125, or by texting her cell phone.

Fall 2024, Dr. Fortner will usually be working in the McNair office Monday and Tuesday mornings, Wednesday afternoons, and Friday all day. Scholars are welcome to use the office whenever Dinkins is open, even if staff are not available. On Fridays, staff aren't available during our weekly catch-up meeting, 11 am – noon). Our program and Scholars are very lucky to have

- **Marian Moorer - Program Assistant** – ([MoorerM@Winthrop.edu](mailto:MoorerM@Winthrop.edu)) is typically available to help Scholars 9 – 3:30 pm MTWRF with the exceptions of lunch time, Friday 11 am staff meetings, and sometimes MCNR 302.
- **Stephanie Bartlett - Writing Coach** – ([BartlettS@Winthrop.edu](mailto:BartlettS@Winthrop.edu)) – Office Hours will be TWS in Dinkins Wednesdays 2:45 - 5 pm and via Zoom Tues 7:30-8:30 pm and Saturdays 11 am – 12:30 pm <https://winthrop-edu.zoom.us/j/86583261852?pwd=Si95RFpNb0lOOTN5cWdUT0U0UzN5dz09>
- **Shyanne Hamrick – McNair GA** ([McNairGA@Winthrop.edu](mailto:McNairGA@Winthrop.edu)) is also a valuable resource for graduate admissions and funding support.
- **Amanda Cavin – Programming Coordinator & McNair Alumnus** – ([CavinA@Winthrop.edu](mailto:CavinA@Winthrop.edu)) – available Mondays 10 am – noon as a resource for graduate admissions and funding support.

### Course Description and Purpose

This course is specifically designed to address the second, third, and fourth mandatory objectives of the Winthrop McNair Scholars Program: *50% of bachelor's degree recipients will enroll in a post baccalaureate program by the fall term of the academic year immediately following completion of that degree, 75% of graduates enrolled in graduate study the previous year will continue to be enrolled the following fall, and 14% of each graduating cohort will earn a PhD within 10 years of earning their bachelor's degree.* With support from the instructor, Writing Coach, program staff, and fellow McNair Scholars, students in this course will prepare applications for graduate programs in the discipline of their choice, pursue graduate funding, practice for graduate program interviews, and prepare to meet graduate study expectations.

### Student Learning Outcomes – By the end of the semester, each student will

1. Compile a portfolio of artifacts to develop competitive graduate applications and bolster references' recommendations, this includes evidence of completing a high quality research product this semester
2. Secure strong positive commitments from at least three appropriate professional references, at least two of whom are faculty members
3. Complete satisfactory application materials for four or more appropriate graduate programs, including statements of intent specific to each program
4. Successfully complete at least one mock interview (online or in person)

5. Prepare materials to secure at least one graduate funding mechanism, e.g., graduate fellowship, scholarship, graduate assistant/associate application
6. Demonstrate effective and professional email, phone, and written communication like what should be used with graduate faculty, directors, and admissions personnel

### **Instructor's expectations of students, in addition to those specified elsewhere in this syllabus**

- 1) You will apply to at least four graduate programs this year and choose one to one to enroll in immediately.
- 2) You will not waste this valuable McNair opportunity to support your graduate admissions journey.
- 3) You will let Dr. Fortner know as soon as possible if you experience obstacles to any aspect of your McNair success, including (but not limited to) class participation, accessing resources, completing program and funding applications, attending class, or completing research. Your McNair team will do all we can to support your success.
- 4) You will complete all Blackboard Assignments by the end of the semester.
- 5) To the best of your ability, you will prepare for and participate in all class activities.
- 6) You will listen and interact effectively and sensitively with fellow Scholars and our speakers even when someone expresses a viewpoint that is very different from your own.
- 7) Graduating Seniors will complete the McNair Exit Survey within two weeks of graduation.

### **Syllabus Change Policy**

The instructor reserves the right to make modifications to this syllabus when doing so facilitates student learning. Students will be notified of any modifications in class, through email and/or Blackboard announcements as early as possible. All students are responsible for the consequences of modifications once they are announced, regardless of class absences or failure to check Blackboard, or read email.

### **Grade Basis: S/U**

To earn a grade of S (Satisfactory) in this course, students must attend and participate in class activities and submit all assignments as per instructions by the end of our final exam time (5:30 pm December 5, 2024). Instructions for each assignment will be shared in class and/or via Blackboard.

**Student Learning Activities - Class Participation, Reading, Leading Discussions, Reference Portfolio, Interviews, Funding application, and Graduate program applications.** All assignments in this course are designed to help students be competitive graduate program applicants. Students will research and choose appropriate graduate programs, complete program and funding application materials, prepare portfolios for references, and build interviewing skills. Each student will have an opportunity to lead a class discussion.

The culminating assignment is the submission of materials required for four graduate programs of the student's choosing. If you submit four or more program applications before 5:30 pm December 5, 2024; you may provide snapshots of the successful graduate application submission messages as proof to meet this final requirement.

### **Readings**

Calarco, J. M. (2020). *A field guide to grad school: Uncovering the hidden curriculum*. Princeton University Press.

\*\*\*\*Please do this now: Sign up for a chapter to annotate for your fellow Scholars and answer other important McNair questions. <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1ut29uzEBHG87pm7OFPX88k5->

[1aLbD47FtUik67NaY30/edit?usp=sharing](https://www.blackboard.com/learningtools/content/1aLbD47FtUik67NaY30/edit?usp=sharing). Post brief, bulleted answers to these three questions for your chapter in the Blackboard (BB) Discussion and highlight a few points in class. In your BB discussion, specify page numbers.

- 1) What did you already know?
- 2) What is particularly helpful now, while choosing graduate programs and preparing applications?
- 3) What do you want to revisit later on?

### Supplemental Resources Winthrop McNair Scholars Received

- McNair Scholar Fee Waiver List is linked here: <https://coenet.org/for-mcnair-2/>
- Asher, D. (2024). *Graduate admissions essays: Write your way into the graduate school of your choice*. Ten Speed Press.
  - See also Dr. Don Asher's Website: [www.DonaldAsher.com/](http://www.DonaldAsher.com/) and
  - YouTube Presentation on Getting into Competitive Graduate Programs <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kwks6-p12Qg>
- Council of Graduate Schools (CGS)
  - April 15 Resolution: <https://cgsnet.org/resources/for-current-prospective-graduate-students/april-15-resolution>
  - CGS (2021) *Making a Grad School Plan: From Application to Orientation*. Washington, DC.
- Grenny, J., Patterson, K., McMillan, R., Switzler, A., & Gregory, E. (2022). *Crucial conversations: Tools for talking when stakes are high*. McGraw Hill.
- Sharma, R. (2020). *The Unwritten Rules of Professional Etiquette: Building a positive reputation in graduate school*. Habile Press.

### Examples of Additional Resources Available in the Winthrop McNair Lending Library

- Byrd, C. D., & Mason, R. S. (2021). *Academic Pipeline Programs: Diversifying Pathways from the Bachelor's to the Professoriate*. University of Michigan Press.
- Posselt, J. R. (2016). *Inside graduate admissions: Merit, diversity, and faculty gatekeeping*. Harvard University Press. (Copies available to borrow from the Winthrop McNair Library.)
- Sleigh, M., Iles, S., & Cannon, B. (Eds.). (2017). *An Eye on Graduate School: Guidance Through a Successful Application*. Psi Chi, the International Honor Society in Psychology.
- Several different graduate essay, graduate program, graduate study, and funding texts

### Use of Course Videos

If any recorded classes are shared, all students are required to follow the following policy (language adapted from Elon University's statement). Recorded classes may not be used in any way that denigrates and/or decontextualizes the instructor or any student whose class remarks are recorded. Any information contained in the recorded class may not be posted, published or quoted without the express consent of the instructor and speaker, and if permission is granted, it must be properly cited. All recordings of class lectures or discussions are to be erased at the end of the semester.

### Attendance Policy

Enrollment in this course is a privilege only allowed to Winthrop's McNair Scholars. Useful information will be shared during every class meeting. Students are required to participate in all class meetings for the entire class meeting. Having more than one *unexcused* absence will result in a grade of U (Unsatisfactory) in the course. As we discuss in McNair, arriving early and participating throughout each class foster a positive impression for recommendations. Missing more than half of any class meeting without just cause will be considered an absence. Talk to Dr. Fortner about ways to make up unexcused absences.

**Winthrop COVID-19 Syllabus Statement - Updated August 15, 2023**

Although COVID-19 has reached an endemic phase it is still important to remain vigilant as we face a recent rise in positive cases. As socially responsible members of this community, everyone is expected to engage in daily health self-monitoring, to stay home (residence hall or off-campus housing) from on-campus class, work, or activities if they begin experiencing any COVID-related symptoms. When experiencing any COVID-related symptoms, students are expected to contact Health Services by completing the QI form in the Patient Portal and respond to the nurse who will contact them with instructions. COVID positive residential students are required to follow their QI plan for 5 days of isolation off campus so be prepared with a back-up plan as well. By continued enrollment in this class, you agree to Winthrop's expectations of students regarding health monitoring and reporting.

The [Center for Student Wellness](#) supports the health and wellbeing of Winthrop students. We believe in the dignity, integrity, growth potential, and innate worth of the individual, and we offer services to foster whole-person health through prevention, education, assessment, treatment, and advocacy (see the mission statement on the "About Us" tab). In addition to Health Services and Promotion, the Office of Accessibility and Test Center, CSW provides counseling services and student advocacy and trauma support. You can learn more here: <https://www.winthrop.edu/csw/our-services.aspx>.

**The Food Box** (from <https://www.winthrop.edu/cas/nutrition/the-food-box.aspx>)

In an effort to reduce food insecurity within the Winthrop community, the Department of Human Nutrition created The Food Box. The Food Box is a donation-based food pantry located in 308 Dalton Hall and it is accessible to the entire Winthrop community with no questions asked. In addition to shelf-stable food, The Food Box offers some personal care items such as toilet paper, soap, toothpaste, and feminine products. **How can I use The Food Box?** Appointments for The Food Box can be made online at <https://calendly.com/thefoodbox/foodboxdropin>. Please note that making an appointment online will require your name and e-mail address to confirm the appointment. We will not use this information for any other purpose, and use of the pantry is still on a no-questions-asked basis. Anonymous appointments can be made by calling the Department of Human Nutrition: 803/323-2101. If you leave a voicemail, you don't need to share your name but please provide a callback number so we can reach out and set up your appointment. **Can I donate to The Food Box?** Yes! Donations of food and personal care items are always welcome and may be dropped off in the box outside of the Department's main office, 302 Dalton Hall. Additional ways to donate are listed at <https://www.winthrop.edu/cas/nutrition/the-food-box.aspx>.

**Winthrop University is committed to providing accessible learning experiences and equal access to education for all students.** The syllabus is available in alternate formats upon request. If you are a student with a disability (including mental health concerns, chronic or temporary medical conditions, learning disabilities, etc.) and you anticipate or experience academic barriers due to the condition, please contact The Office of Accessibility (OA) for information on accommodations, registration, and procedures. After receiving approval for accommodations through OA, please make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so that they may be implemented in a timely manner. **OA contact information: [accessibility@winthrop.edu](mailto:accessibility@winthrop.edu); 803-323-3290; <https://www.winthrop.edu/student-affairs/accessibility/>.**

**Please tutor for the Academic Success Center.** The ASC offers a variety of free personalized and structured resources that help students achieve academic excellence, such as tutoring, academic skill development (test taking strategies, time management counseling, and study techniques), group and individual study spaces, and academic coaching. The ASC is housed next to McNair, Suite 106. Please contact the ASC at 803-323-3929 or [success@winthrop.edu](mailto:success@winthrop.edu), or visit [www.winthrop.edu/success](http://www.winthrop.edu/success).

**Student Code of Conduct.**

Winthrop students are expected to exhibit good conduct in and out of the classroom. Expectations, obligations, and the disciplinary process are described in the Student Conduct Code in the Student Handbook (at <https://www.winthrop.edu/studentconduct/winthrop-university-student-handbook.aspx>) and Graduate Catalog. Academic dishonesty of any form (including but not limited to cheating, plagiarism, falsifying information) is grounds for a U in this course. Winthrop McNair Scholars are expected to behave professionally in all academic and McNair-related contexts and honorably at all times.

**Use of AI (Artificial Intelligence) for Course Assignments** (adapted and partially quoted from <https://tlhub.stanford.edu/docs/course-policies-on-generative-ai-use/> on 8/16/2024). **Students may use generative AI tools in this course with limitations.** Generative AI may be used on all assignments as long as all ideas, reflections, analyses, and interpretations you present in your written work is your own. You may use AI tools for the first and final drafts, to brainstorm starting points and improve the writing quality (spelling, grammar, and clarity) of your final draft, but not to draft grad admissions or for funding application content. You may also use AI tools to help you understand and digest challenging readings, by supplementing (not replacing) your reading.

Use AI tools only in the ways you might get help from a classmate, TA, or tutor — to brainstorm suggestions or practice skills, but not to generate ideas or arguments or to create final products. If you use AI tools to enhance your learning, make sure you are learning in a way that allows you to complete assignments or assessments without AI tools, if required. It is your responsibility to avoid becoming dependent on AI tools in your learning such that you are unable to master the course goals which always require you to complete tasks and demonstrate skills without the use of AI tool assistance. You do not have to cite AI-generated material and/or explain how you have drawn on AI-generated material for this class, but it is a good habit to start.

Be prepared to fact-check and critically evaluate all AI-generated information. Most AI chatbots aren't designed to write sentences that are true — they are designed to write sentences that are plausible. Many AI tools get their training sets and information from the internet and can't make judgements about the information they draw on. Generative AI tools can provide false information (called 'hallucinations'), perpetuate biases and/or stereotypes, or draw on copyrighted information without proper attribution, and such problematic information is often presented very convincingly. Professor permission to use AI does not indicate the materials generated by these tools meet the standards of this course.

**Winthrop University's Office of Nationally Competitive Awards (ONCA)** identifies and assists highly motivated and talented students to apply for nationally and internationally competitive awards, scholarships, fellowships, and unique opportunities both at home and abroad. ONCA gathers and disseminates award information and deadlines across the campus community, and serves as a resource for students, faculty, and staff throughout the nationally competitive award nomination and application process. Please fill out an online information form at [www.winthrop.edu/onca](http://www.winthrop.edu/onca) and email [onca@winthrop.edu](mailto:onca@winthrop.edu) for more information.

**Tentative Schedule for Fall 2024 MCNR 302**

<b>Friday</b>	<b>Class Focus</b>	<b>Work Focus</b> (assignments are identified by superscript numbers, e.g., 7 )
<b>8/23</b>	Course purpose and expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Syllabus breakdown, MOU &amp; McNair Support/Funding Reminders</li> <li>○ What do you want to get out of MCNR 302?</li> <li>○ Sign up for Chapter Discussion<sup>1</sup></li> </ul>
<b>8/30</b>	Choosing Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Before class, read Calarco (2020) Chapter 1: Choosing a Program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In class: what was helpful in chapter 1?</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ Before class, upload to BB your current list of graduate programs of interest with titles, degrees, and universities<sup>2</sup> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In class, open 4 grad app portals and start entering information</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>9/6</b>	Personal Statement – What do they need to know about me? Show don't tell.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ This week, ask three potential references if they are willing to provide strong positive letters of recommendation to support your graduate applications and type your results in the BB assignment</li> <li>○ In class, dust off your personal statement draft<sup>3</sup></li> </ul>
<b>9/13</b>	Personal Statement – Revise, revise, revise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ In class, polish your personal statement</li> <li>○ After class, upload personal statement draft to BB and meet with Stephanie to discuss your goals for the statement<sup>4</sup></li> </ul>
<b>9/20</b>	Travelling with McNair by Ms. Marian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ In class, complete TA and TR drafts and give to Ms. Marian</li> <li>○ In class, update your vita (Dr. Fortner is away)</li> </ul>
<b>9/27</b>	Grants 101 with Dr. F	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ On your temp card, list two graduate funding opportunities you will pursue along deadlines and funding amounts<sup>6</sup></li> <li>○ In class, enter information in national fellowship application portal</li> </ul>
<b>10/4</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ No class - Participate in the SURE Poster Showcase 3-5 pm in Richardson Ballroom; Please wear your McNair Polo, be in group photo</li> <li>○ This week, work on the portfolio for your references (see the checklist on page 8 of this syllabus)</li> <li>○ Incorporate Stephanie's feedback into your statement<sup>5</sup></li> <li>○ If you haven't already, meet with ONCA Director LeeAnn Pounds to identify and/or work on appropriate graduate funding opportunities <a href="https://www.winthrop.edu/onca/contact-us.aspx">https://www.winthrop.edu/onca/contact-us.aspx</a></li> </ul>	
<b>10/11</b>	<b>Fall Break – No Class</b>	
<b>10/18</b>	Avoiding application pitfalls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ In class, discuss what to do and what not to do when completing graduate applications</li> <li>○ Make progress on applications</li> <li>○ Sign up for at least two 11/6 McNair Applicant interviewer time slots</li> </ul>
<b>10/19 – Saturday – Dr. Ronald E. McNair Memorial Run/Walk in Lake City</b>		
<b>10/25</b>	Funding Application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ In class, work on a funding application</li> </ul>
<b>11/1</b>	Introduction to Graduate Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ In class, share your grad program elevator pitch and practice answering grad interview questions</li> <li>○ In class, what to expect during interviews</li> </ul>
<b>Monday - 11/4 – Serve as interviewer for at least two 15-minute McNair applicant interviews<sup>3</sup></b>		

Friday	Class Focus	Work Focus <sup>7</sup>
11/8	Interviewing Well	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ In class, discuss recommendations for successful interviewing and practice answering and asking interview questions</li> <li>○ After class, complete one mock interview at <a href="https://www.winthrop.edu/cdi/big-interview.aspx">https://www.winthrop.edu/cdi/big-interview.aspx</a><sup>4</sup></li> </ul>
11/15	Succeeding in Graduate School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ In class, discuss Navigating Challenges in Graduate School (includes Dr. Hurlbert on Dealing with Difficult/Problematic Faculty)</li> </ul>
11/22	Money Matters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Budgeting for and during Graduate School, Financial Literacy</li> <li>○ Submit FAFSA as an independent student as soon as it opens (anticipated 12/1)</li> </ul>
<b>Thanksgiving Break Wednesday 11/27-12/1: No Classes</b>		
Thursday 12/5	Final Exam Period – Wrapping Up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Finalize and submit your application packages in Blackboard<sup>5,6</sup></li> <li>○ Finalize and submit remaining BB assignments</li> </ul>

**Graded Assignments = Up to 250 points**

- 1) Annotate one chapter of our reading, *A field guide to grad school: Uncovering the hidden curriculum*  
Discussion due the day of your choosing (10 points); Choose your day by signing up 8/23
- 2) Current list of graduate programs of interest with titles, degrees, and universities  
Due 8/30 (10 points)
- 3) Interview at least two McNair applicants the first Monday of November (11/4)  
Due 11/4 (5 points each, 10 points total)
- 4) Complete one Mock Interview (e.g., with Big Interview at <https://www.winthrop.edu/cdi/big-interview.aspx>) Due 12/5 (10 points)
- 5) Complete 4 graduate applications - Due 12/5 (100 points)
- 6) Submit proof of working on a graduate funding application – Due 12/5 (50 points)
- 7) Attend at least 12 classes and participate in course activities during class  
Due Weekly (5 points each week, 60 points total)

### Reference Packet Checklist

1. **Letter of introduction**
  - a) Remind your professors what **courses** and/or research you've completed with that professor and major compliments the professor bestowed on you about your work
  - b) List **leadership, community service, shadowing, or other relevant experiences** your reference may not know
  - c) Mention particular things **you hope your reference will include in their letter**
  - d) Include **test scores** (GRE, etc.) if you want the reference to know/mention/address/combat
  - e) List the **name of programs, degrees, with the Universities** you are applying to
    - i. Tell the reasons each individual program is a **good fit** for you and you for it
    - ii. If appropriate, mention faculty and/or resources you're interested in working with at the institution
    - iii. Specify your **deadlines** (for Dr. F, organize this list in chronological order of deadline)
    - iv. Indicate the method of submission (e.g., online portal using attached login information, email link, etc.)
  - f) Share your gratitude
2. For professors, share a copy of your best writing assignment they graded
3. **Reprints of research presentation slides, handouts, posters, or manuscripts**
4. **Curriculum Vita**
5. **Unofficial Transcript or DegreeWorks printout**
6. **Completed FERPA Consent Release Form (e.g., <http://www.winthrop.edu/uploadedFiles/recandreg/CONSENT-FORRELEASE-EDUC-RECORDS.pdf>)**
7. **Draft of a statement of intent**
8. **In/on the online/paper forms, complete all of questions you can** including your name, name of program/position to/for which you are applying, your decision to waive/not waive your rights to view the letter (if applicable), name of reference (e.g., Dr. Cheryl Fortner), Reference's e-mail (e.g., [fortnerc@winthrop.edu](mailto:fortnerc@winthrop.edu)), how long have you known you/the reference (in years), and your relationship to the reference.
9. **Send a grateful reminder a week before your deadline.** For example, send an email that says something like: "Dr. Fortner, I am writing to thank you again for agreeing to write letters of recommendation for me. I am writing to let you know I submitted all of my materials this week." This will show appreciation and serve as a reminder.
10. **In the rare case where a recommendation is to be mailed** vs. uploaded or emailed, include hard copies of required recommendation materials including addressed envelopes.
11. As soon as you learn **you've been accepted, let your reference know** so they can celebrate with you. Send a "Thank you" note. We have "Thank you" cards and stamps for you in the McNair office.